



**YOUR
HEALTH.
YOUR
CHOICE.**

The Birth Control Pill

Talk to your partner about birth control before you have sex. You can use latex condoms to lower your chances of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevent an unwanted pregnancy.

What is the birth control pill?

The birth control pill is a pill that women take to not get pregnant. A clinician has to give you a prescription.

How does the birth control pill work?

The birth control pill works in different ways:

- ★ It stops your ovaries from releasing an egg each month.
- ★ It makes the mucus in the cervix thicker. It is harder for the sperm to travel into the cervix. The cervix is the opening to the uterus.
- ★ The lining of the uterus becomes thinner. This makes it harder for a fertilized egg to attach to the uterus.

How effective is the birth control pill?

When the birth control pill is taken exactly as directed, the failure rate is less than 1 percent. However, if you miss any pills, your chance of getting pregnant increases.

How do you use the birth control pill?

A clinician will tell you how to start using it. You can choose from different kinds of birth control pills. Birth control pills come in packs for 21 days or 28 days. You may read or hear different information, but we recommend that you use a backup method, such as condoms to protect against pregnancy, for the first month in case you miss a pill. If you have diarrhea or vomiting, or if you are taking other medicines, your pills may not work as well. During these times, you should use a backup method like condoms and spermicides to prevent pregnancy. If the doctor gives you any medication, you should tell him or her that you are taking birth control pills.

- ★ Read the instructions that come with the birth control pills, and check the expiry date on the package before you use them.
- ★ If you get the 21-day pack, you take one pill each day for 21 days. These pills contain hormones. Then, for seven days you do not take pills.
- ★ If you get the 28-day pack, you take one pill each day. For 21 days, you take pills that have hormones. For seven days, you take pills that don't have hormones. Your chance of getting pregnant is not increased during the seven days when you are not on the hormone pills.
- ★ The pill should be taken at approximately the same time every day.

It is important to use condoms or a latex barrier with sexual partners to decrease the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

What are the advantages/disadvantages of the birth control pill?

Advantages

- ★ Your chances of getting pregnant are very low.
- ★ Your period is very regular. You might not bleed as much during your period.
- ★ The birth control pills that have estrogen and progesterone lower your chances of getting cancer of the ovaries and the endometrium. The endometrium is the lining of the uterus.
- ★ You don't have to interrupt sex.
- ★ Your partner doesn't have to be involved.

Disadvantages

- ★ A clinician has to give you the prescription.
- ★ You might not be able to use it if you have certain health problems.
- ★ You must remember to take it each day at the same time.
- ★ You're not protected against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- ★ It costs a lot, especially at drugstores. You can buy it for less at some birth control clinics.

What are common side-effects of the birth control pill?

Common side-effects of the birth control pill are nausea, headaches, breast swelling, water retention and depression. The birth control pill may also reduce cramping and shorten the number of days of bleeding during your period.

It might also help premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

A very small number of women suffer more serious side effects. There is a risk of getting heart attacks, strokes, blood clots in the veins, or liver tumors.

Women who take the pill should not smoke.

Where can you get the birth control pill?

You need a prescription to get the birth control pill. You can get the birth control pill at The House Community Health Centre, and at most pharmacies and sexual health clinics.

If you need further information or would like to book an appointment, call:

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services for youth ages 13 to 29. 416-927-7171. Health Services offers same-day, scheduled and drop-in appointments. For more information visit www.ppt.on.ca.

Women's Programming at the Bay Centre for Birth Control for women of all ages at 416-351-3700.

Youth can also access information about sexual health by calling the Teen Sex InfoLine at 416-961-3200 or chat live using MSN messenger at spiderbytes@hotmail.com from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Wednesday and 12 noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. You can also email us a question anytime at askus@spiderbytes.ca or visit www.spiderbytes.ca.